

One family. Forty Parks. And they're still talking to each other...

Perhaps more extraordinary than their indomitable good cheer is what the Watts family of North Carolina talks to each other about: how animals and nature exist in their pure state . . . how small man is on nature's scale . . . how ancient peoples like the Wupatki Pueblo made life out of virtually nothing . . . how the Parks put nature at your back door - no matter where you live. Three years ago, Louanne Watts and her husband set off on a mission to take their children "to as many National Parks as we could until they wouldn't go with us anymore." For no less than two weeks every year, they leave electronic entertainment and farm life behind - and visit Parks like Carlsbad Caverns, Grand Tetons, Apostle Islands and 36 others across the country so far. "We've made sacrifices," says Louanne, "but it's been priceless - for the time we've spent together as a family and what our children have learned." The Watts love the Junior Ranger program - how it has taught their kids "to stop and observe, to notice the small things, to learn from the mistakes people have made out of ignorance to the web of life on this planet."



TRANSFORMING VISITOR EXPERIENCE

MAKING THE CONNECTION, KEEPING IT ALIVE

Not every family can keep up with the Watts; yet every American family can enjoy the historic, cultural, and natural experiences that abound in National Parks. The Parks are at once every American's birthright and the world's most fantastic public treasure. A treasure not to be locked away, but to be experienced throughout life. A treasure that rewards visitors with deeply meaningful personal connections to their heritage, land, and culture. A treasure that is not depleted by use, but further enriched by all who support and care for it.

In a world where reality is increasingly virtual, National Parks represent an enduring connection to the physical world. While video games and other technology are attractive to kids of all ages, the lure of the Parks - the rushing water at Great Falls in Maryland, the twilight flight of the bats at Carlsbad Caverns or the stirring sight of Mount Rushmore National Memorial - has stood the test of time.

Many visitors begin their National Park experience with a stop at the Visitor Center, where exhibits often set the tone for that experience and are often the best chance to forge a lasting bond with visitors. **When exhibits fail to connect with people, people fail to connect with their Parks.** And when we lose that connection, an enormous opportunity is wasted. Visitor Experience Programs are designed to ensure that connection is not lost, but strengthened. With renewed and expanded funding we can transform the Visitor Experience by:

- Developing and deploying state-of-the-art exhibit technology and media that allows each visitor - regardless of age, background, or ability - to discover the transforming power of the National Park experience.
- Offering a broad menu of choices for people to connect with the Parks on their own terms and at their own level.
- Raising the overall quality and consistency of Visitor Experiences by coordinating resources, expertise, and innovations from the private, non-profit, and government sectors.

NPF AT WORK: VISITOR EXPERIENCE GRANT PROGRAMS

The **National Park Discovery Centers** are multi-sensory and interactive exhibits and educational spaces designed specifically for children and families . . . The much beloved **National Park Junior Ranger** program provides fun and engaging activities for children to discover history and nature. Those who complete the activities are sworn in as official Junior Rangers . . . **National Park Visitor Education Films** produced by Discovery Communications, Inc. use cutting-edge techniques and technology to make difficult concepts like geologic time more tangible, relevant, and fun . . . Ford Motor Company recently restored 32 historic buses to transport visitors at Glacier National Park - the **Glacier National Park Red Bus Restoration**. The Red Buses continue to be one of the best ways to experience the Park. An added bonus: They now run on cleaner-burning propane.

"I can't believe the Reds are back! Glacier wouldn't be Glacier without them - and I can't wait to show my grandchildren the bus their grandpa used to drive."

- Former 'Jammer', or driver of a Glacier Red Bus, upon his first trip back to the Park after the fleet was back on the road.